CLAIMS:-

1.   A gaming machine including:

a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any
5   of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

10   said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

2.   A gaming machine according to claim 1 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

3.   A gaming machine according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said feature qualifying
15   attributes are awarded at random.

4.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 2 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

5.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 2 wherein said feature
20   qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

6.   A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

25   7.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

8.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.

5   9.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

10.   A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of
10   predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

11.   A gaming machine according to claim 10 wherein said feature game includes free games.

12.   A gaming machine according to claim 10 or claim 11 wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.

15   13.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 12 wherein said feature game includes substitute symbols.

14.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 13 wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.

15.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 14 wherein said feature
20   game includes held reels.

16.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 15 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.

17.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 16 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.

25   18.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 17 wherein said feature game includes bonus substitute symbols.

19.   A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 18 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

20.   A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

21.   A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.

22.   A gaming machine according to claim 21 wherein said machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.

23.   A gaming machine according to claim 22 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.

24.   A gaming machine according to claim 23 wherein a jackpot screen will appear for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.

25.   A gaming machine according to claim 23 or claim 24 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.

26.   A gaming machine according to claim 23 or claim 24 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.

27.   A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.

28.   A method of operating a gaming machine, the method including the steps of:
providing a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a

window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

29. A method according to claim 28 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

30. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded at random.

31. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

32. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

33. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

34. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

35. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.

36. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

37. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 36 wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

38.   A method according to claim 37 wherein said feature game includes free games.

39.   A method according to claim 37 or claim 38 wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.

40.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 39 wherein said feature game includes substitute symbols.

41.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 40 wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.

42.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 41 wherein said feature game includes held reels.

43.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 42 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.

44.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 43 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.

45.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 44 wherein said feature game includes bonus substitute symbols.

46.   A method according to any one of claims 37 to 45 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.

47.   A method according to any one of claims 28 to 46 wherein varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.

48.   A method according to any one of claims 28 to 47 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.

49.   A method according to claim 48 wherein said machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.

50.   A method according to claim 49 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.

51.   A method according to claim 50 wherein a jackpot screen will appear for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.

52.   A method according to claim 50 or claim 51 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.

53.   A method according to claim 50 or claim 51 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.

54.   A method according to any one of claims 28 to 53 wherein said base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.